

28. *Studio Nude* (Detail)

JOSEPH NICOLETTI

PAINTINGS · DRAWINGS

The
Bowdoin
College
Library

Joseph Nicoletti

Paintings and Drawings

Foreword by
Russell J. Moore

Introduction by
Jeffrey Muller

Bowdoin College
Museum of Art

Copyright 1977 The President and Trustees of Bowdoin College

Bowdoin College Museum of Art
Brunswick, Maine
January 21 — February 27, 1977

Foreword

This is the inaugural faculty show in the newly expanded Museum of Art and follows the *Selected Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture, and Photographs by Student Artists* exhibition.

Joseph Nicoletti came to Bowdoin from Yale to teach in 1972 and has been with the Department of Art through its expansion from classes in the Walker Art Building basement to the recent opening of the Visual Arts Center. An exhibition of his work was conceived sometime ago but was postponed until after completion of the museum renovation. We are therefore pleased to present, at long last, the largest single showing of Mr. Nicoletti's work to date.

I wish to thank Jeffrey Muller for his perceptive introduction, John McKee for photographing many of Mr. Nicoletti's works, and College Editor Edward Born for producing the catalogue.

Russell J. Moore
Curator



30. *Studio Nude* (1974)

Introduction

The paintings and drawings in this exhibition represent a span of years in the artist's career. The approaches taken through these years progress as an exploration of possibilities of technique and strategies of painting. Although the approach has shifted, there is consistency in the work of earlier and later years. Through all Nicoletti's art, one finds an uncompromising study of basic relationships in what we see.

The earlier *View of New Haven*, for example, is executed in a finely modulated sculptural style. The sense of rhythm and form, of architectural structure, is achieved by the abstraction of a cityscape into a tautly balanced system of geometric volumes, spheres, cubes, pyramids, all joined by a gentle modeling light.

In more recent pieces, however, Nicoletti has begun to explore the physical and immediate aspects of painting. The brilliantly colored sunset sketches are all quickly executed with the intent to capture a moment, a quickly passing configuration of light, clouds, and landscape. As a consequence, brush strokes are broken and free. The artist is painting out-of-doors now. His desire is to perceive and depict the variety of natural light. This returns to a direct confrontation between artist and nature. Plein-air painting leads in Nicoletti's work to a more intense palette. The colors of the sunset pieces glow more brightly and are deeper than the tones of the earlier *View of New Haven*.

In these works there is discovery about what we see, which can be pleasing, comic, or disturbing. The discoveries can arise from the interplay of form and color perceived in a group of cows, from the psychological niches of space into which people in a Laundromat are placed, or from the forms of a woman's body. All these images become discoveries. Nicoletti makes his explorations within the boundaries of traditional subject matter, landscape, cityscape, still life, the nude, and portraiture. This makes the discovery more enjoyable and original. In *Laundromat* a centuries-old theme, people washing clothes, is transformed into the eerie yet comic condition of modern times.

Nicoletti's subject matter reflects changing times. Abstract art rejected conventions of naturalistic representation that had become dead formulae. Our vision purged, we can look at the world with new eyes. We can see the interconnectedness of all things. We know the preciousness of what remains untouched. Landscape painting such as Nicoletti's now evokes an authentic response in us. The interactions of color and form in Nicoletti's work are so subtle as to give a hint at the complexity of the world around us.

While we recognize the landscape again we also perceive the new elements cast into it. A highway curving through an overpass that seems to hang in midair, a truck resting in a field of green are the subjects of exciting, truthful paintings. What is remarkable about Nicoletti's observation of these different focuses of our world is the quiet poetry with which he transforms them. The model seated in a studio is more an expression of a mood than an academic study. The mood is communicated by expert use of color, a fine grasp of geometric forms and rhythms, an oblique or innovative view of space. Ultimately, we recognize that it is the poetic recognition of a fine point of meeting when reality becomes mixed with our subjective feelings.

Behind the poetry of Nicoletti's art there is always a level of fine craft which heightens the beauty of his pictures and drawings and can be enjoyed for its own sake. For example, consider his choice of the technique of silverpoint in drawing. The way it works is that the artist prepares his paper with a white ground of a material that is resistant enough to pick up strokes made by a silver-tipped stylus. The lines recorded are fine and delicate. Because they are drawn on a prepared ground, they cannot be erased. The technique demands, therefore, precision and subtlety of touch. Only the careful variation of the density of lines and the pressure with which they are applied enable the artist to achieve the gradations of tone that give silverpoint drawings their special quality of refinement. The same realization of the potential of different media is evident in the charcoal, pencil, and watercolor drawings, and in the paintings.

Joseph Nicoletti's art is one of fine touch and sensibility. It is rich in knowledge and tradition and achieves a variety of new visions. We have indicated some aspects. The eye will see more.

Jeffrey Muller



28. *Studio Nude* (1975)



57. *Studio Nude, Seated* (1974)



55. *Studio Nude, Standing* (1975)



54. *Portrait of Susan* (1975)



42. *Portrait of June* (1976)



13. *Sink Still Life* (1976)



1. *Studio Still Life* (1976)



56. *Pejepscot Still Life* (1974)



58. *Studio Still Life* (1974)



59. *Studio Still Life* (1974)



68. *New Haven Interior* (1972)



43. *Studio Still Life* (1976)



6. *Highway Scape, I-95* (1976)



15. *Sunset, Clouds, and Smoke* (1976)



8. *Five Cows* (Detail)



8. *Five Cows* (1976)

Catalogue

Measurements are in inches, followed by centimeters in parentheses. Height precedes width.

Paintings

1. STUDIO STILL LIFE (1976)
 Oil on canvas, 48 x 36 (122 x 91)

2. PORTRAIT OF SALLY (1976)
 Oil on canvas, 48 x 36 (122 x 91)

3. STUDIO INTERIOR WITH CLOCK (1976)
 Oil on canvas, 12 x 12 (30 x 30)

4. ANDROSCOGGIN OVERPASS (1976)
 Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 (61 x 76)

5. HIGHWAY SCAPE, ROUTE 1 (1976)
 Oil on canvas, 12 x 16 (30 x 41)

6. HIGHWAY SCAPE, I-95 (1976)
 Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

7. I-95 OVERPASS (1976)
 Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

8. FIVE COWS (1976)
 Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 (91 x 122)

9. FIVE COWS (1976)
 Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

10. COWS—RAINY DAY (1976)
 Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

11. COWS—SUNNY DAY (1976)
 Oil on masonite, 8 x 6 (20 x 15)

12. FOUR COWS, SKETCH (1976)
 Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

13. SINK STILL LIFE (1976)
Oil on masonite, 12 x 16 (30 x 41)

14. PORTRAIT OF CHAKÉ (1976)
Oil on canvas, 16 x 12 (41 x 30)

15. SUNSET, CLOUDS, AND SMOKE (1976)
Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

16. SUNSET, FALL (1976)
Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

17. SUNSET, HIGHLAND ROAD (1976)
Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

18. SUNSET, PLEASANT HILL ROAD (1976)
Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

19. SUNSET WITH TREES (1976)
Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

20. LAUNDROMAT (1976)
Oil on canvas, 30 x 48 (76 x 122)

21. WILD ORCHIDS (1976)
Oil on masonite, 16 x 12 (41 x 30)

22. BRUNSWICK DUMP (1976)
Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

23. COTTLES—RAINY SUNDAY (1976)
Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

24. BRUNSWICK MALL (1976)
Oil on masonite, 6 x 8 (15 x 20)

25. LAUNDROMAT BOY (1975)
Oil on masonite, 9 x 8 (23 x 20)

26. LAUNDROMAT FIGURES (1975)
Oil on masonite, 15 x 11½ (38 x 29)

27. LAUNDROMAT SKETCH (1975)
Oil on masonite, 11 x 17½ (28 x 44)

28. STUDIO NUDE (1975)
Oil on canvas, 23 x 19 (58 x 48)

29. TOPSHAM OVERPASS (1975)
Oil on masonite, 12 x 16 (30 x 41)

30. STUDIO NUDE (1974)
Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 (101 x 76)

31. CHEVY TRUCK (1973)
Oil on masonite, 22½ x 17 (57 x 43)

32. POPHAM BEACH FIGURE (1973)
Oil on masonite, 15½ x 23 (39 x 58)

33. STUDIO INTERIOR (1973)
Oil on masonite, 15 x 12 (38 x 30)

34. SWING SKETCH (1973)
Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 (91 x 76)

35. SWING (1973)
Oil on masonite, 24 x 15½ (61 x 39)

36. PEJEPSCOT LANDSCAPE (1972)
Oil on masonite, 10 x 12 (25 x 30)

37. NEW HAVEN CITYSCAPE (1972)
Oil on canvas, 16 x 14 (41 x 36)

38. NEW HAVEN CITYSCAPE (1972)
Oil on masonite, 11 x 10 (28 x 25)

39. SELF-PORTRAIT (1972)
Oil on masonite, 15 x 9 (38 x 23)

40. STILL LIFE WITH FIGURINE (1971)
Oil on canvas, 22 x 20½ (56 x 52)

41. STILL LIFE WITH BUST (1971)
Oil on canvas, 19½ x 18 (50 x 46)

Drawings

42. PORTRAIT OF JUNE (1976)
Pencil, 15 x 11 (38 x 28)
Collection of David and June Vail

43. STUDIO STILL LIFE (1976)
Charcoal, 18 x 14 (46 x 35)

44. STUDIO NUDE, SEATED (1976)
Pencil and watercolor, 22 x 14½ (56 x 37)

45. THREE STUDIO FIGURES (1976)
Pencil, 27 x 21 (70 x 53)

46. SELF-PORTRAIT (1976)
Charcoal, 26 x 20 (66 x 51)

47. COW COMPOSITION (1976)
Charcoal, 36 x 48 (91 x 122)

48. PORTRAIT OF DEBORAH (1976)
Pencil and watercolor, 13½ x 10 (34 x 25)
Collection of Jeffrey and Deborah Del Gais Muller

49. STUDIO NUDE, SEATED (1976)
Silverpoint, 14 x 9½ (36 x 24)

50. DOLL (1976)
Pencil and watercolor, 7 x 5 (18 x 13)

51. STUDIO STILL LIFE (1976)
Silverpoint, 10 x 6½ (25 x 17)

52. STUDIO NUDE, SEATED (1975)
Charcoal, 17 x 13 (43 x 33)

53. PEJEPSCOT INTERIOR (1975)
Silverpoint, 14 x 10 (36 x 25)

54. PORTRAIT OF SUSAN (1975)
Pencil and watercolor, 14 x 10½ (36 x 27)

55. STUDIO NUDE, STANDING (1975)
Silverpoint, 20 x 14 (51 x 36)

56. PEJEPSCOT STILL LIFE (1974)
Silverpoint, 10 x 6½ (25 x 17)

57. STUDIO NUDE, SEATED (1974)
Pencil, 15 x 11 (38 x 28)

58. STUDIO STILL LIFE (1974)
Silverpoint, 14 x 10 (36 x 25)

59. STUDIO STILL LIFE (1974)
Silverpoint, 10 x 7 (25 x 18)

60. STUDIO INTERIOR (1974)
Pencil, 22 x 16 (56 x 41)

61. STUDIO STILL LIFE (1974)
Pencil and watercolor, 14½ x 11 (37 x 28)

62. STUDIO NUDE, RECLINING (1974)
Pencil, 14 x 11 (36 x 28)

63. STUDIO INTERIOR (1974)
Pencil, 14½ x 10½ (37 x 27)

64. CAT STUDIES (1974)
Silverpoint, 7 x 10 (18 x 25)

65. STUDIO STILL LIFE (1973)
Pencil, 14½ x 9½ (37 x 24)
Collection of Samuel and Betty Smith

66. STUDIO INTERIOR (1973)
Pencil, 22 x 15 (56 x 38)

67. STUDIO STILL LIFE (1973)
Pencil, 14 x 10 (36 x 25)
Collection of David Becker

68. NEW HAVEN INTERIOR (1972)
Pencil, 14½ x 10 (37 x 25)

69. HEAD AND CITYSCAPE (1972)
Pencil, 14 x 11 (36 x 28)

70. NEW HAVEN INTERIOR (1972)
Pencil, 13½ x 11 (34 x 28)

One thousand copies of this catalogue were printed by the Salina Press of East Syracuse, New York. Set in Alpha Type's rendition of Optima by the J.S. McCarthy Co. of Augusta, Maine. Designed by Edward Born.